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AUTHOR Andresen, Oliver
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ABSTRACT

Designed to assess the level of thematic profundity of a reader's response to short stories, the Literary Profundity Test consists of four very short stories, each with four endings representing one of the five levels in the Literary Profundity Scale: physical, mental, moral, psychological, and philosophical. Nine experts have agreed that each ending is a good example of the profundity level for which it was written. The test-taker chooses what he considers the most profound of the four endings. [This document is one of those reviewed in The Research Instruments Project (TRIP) monograph "Measures for Research and Evaluation in the English Language Arts" to be published by the Committee on Research of the National Council of Teachers of English in cooperation with the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills. A TRIP review which precedes the document lists its category (Literature), title, author, date, and age range (senior high, postsecondary), and describes the instrument's purpose and physical characteristics.] (RB)

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on Research



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH
1111 KENYON ROAD
URBANA, ILLINOIS 61801

Category: Literature

Title: Literary Profundity Test

Author: Oliver Andresen

Age Range: Senior High, Post Secondary

Description of the Instrument:

Purpose: To assess the level of thematic "profundity" of a reader's response to short stories.

Date of Construction: 1968

Physical Description: The LPT consists of four very short stories, each with four endings representing one of the five levels in the Literary Profundity Scale: physical, mental, moral, psychological, and philosophical. The test-taker chooses the most profound of the four endings. The chart below indicates how the five-level scale could be used to classify a reader's response to Gone with the Wind.

(As applied to *Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell)

Physical plane

Reader is aware primarily only of the physical actions of the characters. Ex.: The battle scenes and burning of Atlanta.

Mental plane

Reader is aware of the physical and intellectual actions of the characters. Ex.: The machinations of Scarlet O'Hara.

Moral plane

Reader is aware of the physical and intellectual actions of the characters in the light of an ethical code. Ex.: Scarlet's endeavors to win the attentions of Ashley Wilkes.

Psychological plane

Reader is aware of the psychological forces influencing the characters' physical and intellectual actions in the light of an ethical code. Ex.: Scarlet's rebellion against the social mores of the Old South.

Philosophical plane

Reader is aware of the "universal truths" expounded by the author through the physical, intellectual, and ethical behavior of the characters under the influence of psychological forces. Ex.: The "pageant" of the decline of the way of life of the Old South.

Validity, Reliability, and Normative Data:

The validity of the LPT derives from judgments of nine experts about whether the four endings to each story were good examples of the profundity levels for which they had been written. On the final form of the measure there was complete agreement among the judges on each of the endings.

From the results of tryouts with forty-one high school students (grade level not specified) the split-halves coefficient of correlation was .76. The K-R 30 reliability was .84.

Ordering information:

EDRS

Related documents:

Oliver Andresen, "The Significance of Profundity in Literary Appreciation," Reading Research Quarterly, 5 (Fall 1969), 100-118.

Oliver Andresen

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PROFUNDITY TEST

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Directions

This is a test to see how well you can judge literature. Specifically, this test measures your skill in judging how profound or "deep" an idea is in a story.

The test consists of four short stories. Each story has five endings. You are to compare the endings of each story according to how profound or "deep" they are.

First, read Story I, "Baseball," and its five endings. Then turn to the answer sheet and compare the endings according to the directions on the answer sheet.

When you have answered the questions for Story I, read Story II, "Lions," and answer the questions for this story on the answer sheet. Do the same for Story III, "Louise," and Story IV, "Wolves."

Raise your hand when you have finished the test.

Story I

BASEBALL

Pete was discouraged. This was his second summer in the minors. The Yankees had sent him there, telling him he would hear from them when he was ready for the big leagues. He had worked hard, and he thought he was a good ball player now. He certainly felt that he was ready to join the Yankees in New York. Yet, he never heard from any of the important people in New York connected with the Yankees. At the same time he was never given much attention by his manager, Al Dahl. Pete was never praised for the really good plays he made.

It was different with Barney Jones. Pete knew that he was better than Barney. Yet, every time Barney made a sensational play, Al Dahl never seemed to stop praising him for it. Al liked Barney better, that was all. It wasn't fair.

One day Pete fell into conversation with a man having lunch at the hotel where the ball players lived.

Then --

Ending A

Pete told the stranger how unfair Al Dahl was. The man seemed very much interested. That afternoon the game was really close. There was no score, with Pete's team doing the best it could to hold its own. Pete was playing left field.

Suddenly a high fly came his way. Barney Jones was trying for it, too, when he stumbled. The ball was deflected from his glove right into Pete's glove. Pete then threw the ball home just in time for a double play.

The man at lunch was at the game because he was a Yankee scout. He told Pete after the game that the catch was one of the most fantastic plays he had ever seen. As for Pete, he could start packing. He was on his way to New York and the Yankees.

Ending B

When Pete began to complain to the stranger about how Al Dahl was ignoring him, the stranger suggested that maybe Pete was too good a player. Suppose, said the stranger, that Pete should purposely play a bad game. Then the manager would notice him.

That afternoon a high fly came Pete's way. Barney Jones tried for it but could not catch it. Now it was Pete's turn to try for the ball. If he would miss it, then Al Dahl would really have a game to worry about. At the same time Pete would be the foremost player in Al's mind. Pete began to smile -- then suddenly he frowned. With great effort he reached for the ball, grabbed it and pegged it home for a double play.

After the game the stranger he had met at lunch came up to him. The stranger explained that he was really a Yankee scout. He knew that Pete was a good player, he said, but he wanted to see if Pete were loyal. He was convinced now. Pete was ready to join the Yankees.

Ending C

At lunch Pete was told by the stranger that he was a scout for the Yankees. The stranger had come especially to see Pete and Barney play. One of them would go back to New York. That afternoon Pete played the best game he could. He knew he was doing well; yet, he suspected that Barney was really playing better.

After the game in Al Dahl's office Pete and Barney were given the news. The scout told them that Barney was the one to go to New York. Pete hung his head sadly. Al Dahl put a hand on Pete's shoulder to comfort him. Then Pete shook Barney's hand and quietly left the office.

But later that evening he began to think things over. Perhaps it was really a lucky afternoon for him, too. He knew now that he should give up baseball. There was no sense in being angry over the decision; he convinced himself of that. He knew now that he was not as good as he thought he was -- although he had certainly tried hard enough. He decided he would like to go back to school or get a job. There were other things besides baseball he would like to do.

Ending E

The stranger listened to Pete's complaint about how Al Dahl was overlooking Pete's abilities. Then the stranger suggested that maybe Pete was TOO good -- too consistently good, anyway. Why not play a bad game for a change? Then the manager would notice him.

That afternoon the game was tied one to one with Pete in left field and two men on base. Suddenly a high fly came his way. Pete almost caught the ball -- but then with a strange smile he dropped it, letting in two runs. Later he managed to pick up a grounder but threw it wild, letting in another run.

After the game Al Dahl was furious. He asked Pete what went wrong because as a rule, he said, Pete was his best player. Pete replied that Al had never said that before. Al thought a minute, then nodded his head. He had suddenly realized that he had been overlooking Pete's ability. He admitted now that Pete would soon be ready for the Yankees in New York.

Now turn to the answer sheet and compare the endings for Story I.

Story II

LIONS

A proud young lion and his cowardly brother followed their mother through the dried grass of the African plain. For weeks it had not rained and the lions were hungry. In the old days before the sun had become an evil ball of fire in the sky, food was plentiful. Almost every night the mother lion would kill an antelope or a zebra so that her sons could feed on the rich, red meat. Yet, now with the dry heat the game was gone. Only the bones of animals remained by the dried-up water holes. The young lions' stomachs ached with hunger.

As they hunted in the dark of the African night, the cowardly brother began to whine. He cried to his mother, demanding the food she usually provided. The pain in his stomach was powerful. Yet, the brave lion kept his silence. He despised his weak brother for his cowardice.

Then --

Ending A

After they had traveled half the night finding no game, the proud young lion decided to hunt by himself. His cowardly brother was too frightened to join him. With a snarl of disgust the proud young lion slipped into the bush.

Towards morning, by a dried water hole he saw a large water buffalo pawing at the ground. With his sharp horns, the buffalo was dangerous prey. Yet, the young lion attacked. He was wounded in the fight, but finally the buffalo was dead.

From the shadows came his mother and brother. The proud young lion let his mother eat her fill. Then he began to gorge himself on the hot flesh.

Suddenly, from the shadows came a whimper from his brother who had not dared to help with the kill. Yet, he was starving. The proud young lion was about to drive his brother away; but he changed his mind. Holding back a snarl of disgust, he allowed his brother to creep forward and feed at his side.

Ending D

As the sun began to rise, the mother lion decided to rest in the shade of some brush. Beside her stretched her sons who soon fell asleep. But the mother did not sleep. She knew now that her sons were too weak to hunt. She had better hunt by herself. After they had rested, they could find her. Perhaps by then she would have made a kill. After a moment, she silently got to her feet and trotted off over a small hill.

The smaller lion was the first to awake. He gave a cry of alarm when he saw that his mother had gone. His cry awoke his brother, who also was frightened. With terror the two young lions ran back and forth through the brush looking for their mother. Finally, they found the trail of her scent going over the hill. Immediately, the smaller lion ran over the hill to find her.

But the larger lion did not follow. Several times he ran to the top of the hill and looked at the hot, empty plain beyond. Yet, he did not dare cross it alone. Finally, he returned to the shade where the scent of his mother was still strong. His eyes wide with fear, he lay down, panting in the heat.

Ending C

A cry of an animal halted them. Immediately the mother lion crouched, preparing to spring. In the shadow of the brush stood a young goat. The goat caught the scent of lions and gave a new cry of terror; but it did not run away.

The mother was about to spring when her brave son gave a roar. How stupid to roar before a kill! With a cry of anger she turned on her son -- just as a shot rang out. A bullet cut the air where the mother would have been had she completed her leap. Two hunters were in a tree nearby. The goat was their bait. The brave lion knew that something was wrong because the goat did not run away. The three lions ran safely into the bush.

Once they were out of danger, the mother licked her son's face to show her gratitude for saving her life. So clever a son would certainly find food soon. With the brave lion in the lead, they continued the hunt.

Ending D

Suddenly the mother halted. There was a strange scent in the air, filling her with terror. It was the scent of men. In a ditch up ahead was a truck that belonged to men. The lions did not realize that the truck's motor had given out and that the men driving it had left.

Yet, the brave lion noticed an odor about the truck -- the odor of delicious meat. In the back of the truck was a dead antelope shot by the men that afternoon.

Cautiously the brave young lion crept forward. Quickly he jumped into the truck and pulled out the dead animal. His mother then dragged the carcass into the brush, where the three lions fed upon it in safety.

Ending E

After a long journey through the night, they came to a fence built by men. On the other side of the fence were cattle. The mother hesitated for a moment, the scent of men frightening her. Then she quietly leaped the fence.

A shot rang out. At the same time the mother appeared over the fence with a young calf in her jaws. Immediately the two sons began to gorge themselves on the flesh.

Suddenly the proud young lion looked at his mother. She was lying very still with a hole in her neck. She was dead. With a cry of alarm the proud young lion ran from the spot so fast that his brother was lost far behind. The proud young lion was alone -- utterly alone, and his heart was now filled with terror.

Now turn to the answer sheet and compare the endings for Story II.

Story III

LOUISE

Miss Anderson told the class to quiet down and not to be so excited. She was about to announce whom the class had elected to call on Mrs. Farnsworth. Mrs. Farnsworth was a writer who lived in town. She was old now and had been famous for many years. The class had just finished studying her short stories.

Louise sat very still, waiting for Miss Anderson's announcement. More than anything else Louise wanted to be the one chosen to call on the great writer. Louise had read everything Mrs. Farnsworth had written. During the discussions in class Louise was always quick to protest against any remark that was unfavorable about Mrs. Farnsworth's work. Yet, Louise knew that no one in the class would vote for her to go. She was considered to be rather odd by most of her fellow students and so she did not have many friends in school.

"The choice is --" Miss Anderson began. Then she smiled. "Elizabeth," she said.

The class greeted the name with cries of delight as the bell rang.

Then --

Ending A

Louise felt very bad that she was not chosen to call on Mrs. Farnsworth -- particularly when Elizabeth did not seem too excited about going. Louise felt so sad that she decided to go home from school somewhat earlier than usual.

While riding on the public bus she began to re-read her favorite Farnsworth story, "The Black Moon," to cheer herself up. It was a story about a girl who had spent a year as a nurse in India. Yet, Louise could hardly see the words because of the tears in her eyes.

Suddenly there was a gentle hand on her arm. A gray-haired lady next to her was smiling. She said that she could not help but introduce herself because of the story Louise was reading. The lady was Mrs. Farnsworth.

Ending B

After class Elizabeth ran up to Louise and put an arm around her shoulder. Elizabeth said she knew how much Louise admired Mrs. Farnsworth. Consequently, rather than her going Elizabeth asked Louise to make the visit instead.

The next day Louise was greeted politely by Mrs. Farnsworth in her large, old home. Once they were seated, Mrs. Farnsworth did most of the talking. She said several times that her books were selling well and that she was making a great deal of money. In fact, her life was very much better now since Mr. Farnsworth no longer lived at home. Mrs. Farnsworth added that she did wish her son would visit her more often, but apparently he preferred to remain in Europe. Then Mrs. Farnsworth excused herself for not having more time to visit.

Louise shook her head with confusion as she followed Mrs. Farnsworth to the door. As she waited for the bus she could hardly bear the disappointment she felt. She knew now that the gentle, understanding authoress, the "friend" who wrote all those wonderful stories did not exist. She wondered if she would ever have such a terrible disappointment again.

Ending D

The stranger finally asked Pete why he was so sad. Then Pete told him about how anxious he was to be a successful ball player. He explained that he was not interested only in the big money he would be making. He wanted everyone to know he was a good ball player. At least he was certainly better than Barney Jones.

After the game that afternoon, Pete was called into Al Dahl's office. The stranger was there, too. He told Pete he had good news. The stranger explained that he was a Yankee scout and had watched the game with particular interest that afternoon. After talking it over with Al Dahl, the stranger said he had decided to take both Pete and Barney Jones to New York. In fact, the stranger said that both of them were the most promising players to be discovered in a long time.

When Pete left the office, he was surprised at his own feelings. Finally he was to join the Yankees; yet, he was not happy about it. His great dream had now come true--yet Barney was to go, too!

Ending C

After class Elizabeth asked Louise to call on Mrs. Farnsworth with her. They would not tell Mrs. Anderson or anyone else until the visit was over, and then it would not matter. Louise hesitated, but of course she wanted to go very much.

Yet, the next day when they arrived at Mrs. Farnsworth's home, Louise felt very inferior and out of place in front of so great a person. She knew now that she was far less able than Elizabeth in asking questions and being a pleasant caller.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Farnsworth seemed very much interested in Louise's quiet comments. In fact, as the girls rose to leave, Mrs. Farnsworth gave Louise a small, unpublished book of poems. She explained that she wrote them when she was not much older than Louise. Mrs. Farnsworth said that she was very unhappy and lonely in those days. Yet, as she grew older she found happiness in her work as a writer. She asked Louise to come back soon and talk with her about those poems of her youth.

Ending D

After class, with tears in her eyes, Louise pleaded with Elizabeth to take her along. Elizabeth was surprised at Louise's behavior. Miss Anderson had said that only one person should make the visit. But Louise said she didn't care what Miss Anderson had said. Then Louise began to cry and pleaded so hard that Elizabeth finally gave in.

Yet, when the girls arrived at Mrs. Farnsworth's home the next day, they were surprised to find how old and tired the authoress appeared to be. As the girls took their seats, they seemed almost to overwhelm Mrs. Farnsworth. In fact, most of their questions she answered only with a smile and a nod of her head.

Suddenly Louise had tears in her eyes. Before her sat this woman, once great, now gently fading from life. Louise thought of the hours she had spent enjoying Mrs. Farnsworth's stories. Now Louise was torturing her!

Ending E

After class Louise pleaded with Elizabeth to take her to call on Mrs. Farnsworth, but Elizabeth refused. With tears in her eyes Louise walked down the hall. She thought how pretty and popular Elizabeth was and how everyone liked her -- that is, except for Ronny. Ronny did not often date girls although he was the best looking boy in school. In fact, the only girl he talked to very much was Louise because she helped him study.

Suddenly Louise had an idea. She hurried back to Elizabeth with a message which she claimed she almost forgot to deliver. Ronny needed help with his chemistry. Elizabeth, of course, was very good in chemistry; but then Elizabeth would be calling on Mrs. Farnsworth tomorrow when Ronny needed help

The next day Louise stood before the great, wooden door, her heart pounding with excitement. The door opened and Mrs. Farnsworth greeted her caller.

Now turn to the answer sheet and compare the endings for Story III.

Story IV

WOLVES

For several years the sheep ranchers in Northern Texas had been losing too much of their valuable stock to old Silver Fang and his mate, Moonlight. Judging from the stories of those ranchers who had seen him, I knew that Silver Fang was one of the biggest wolves in the West. And he was a crafty animal. The local trappers had tried every trick they knew to catch him. Yet, he outwitted them every time. He would take the bait from the trap and leave the trap unsprung. If the meat had been poisoned, he seemed to know this and would leave it untouched. Then he and his mate, Moonlight, would attack a flock of sheep, first killing to eat and then killing just for the pleasure of it. The two of them never traveled with any other wolves. Yet, together they cut down over a thousand sheep a year.

That is why I was called upon the scene. I had the reputation for being one of the best hunters in the Southwest. There was big money for me if I could outwit old Silver Fang and his mate and bring their hides back to the ranchers.

Then --

Ending A

I tried every trick I knew to catch Silver Fang and his mate, but he continued to escape me. However, I noticed something while studying his tracks. Whenever he found one of my traps, he would jump to the left of the trail. This gave me an idea. I set a trap in the middle of the trail they used every night, covering it with brush as always. Then I put three traps on both sides of the trail, covering these as carefully as I could.

That night Silver Fang and Moonlight came down the trail, sniffing cautiously as always. Upon discovering the first trap, Silver Fang jumped to the left -- and another pair of iron jaws grabbed him. He struggled, but in vain. When I found him the next morning, he was dead, with one massive paw still clutched by the jaws of my trap.

Moonlight had disappeared. But without her mate to guide her, she was no match for me. I trapped her three days later in the hills.

Ending B

One evening as usual I baited a heavy trap and covered it carefully with brush. The next morning to my surprise the trap was gone, and the stake I had chained it to had been ripped from the ground. I could tell by the trail that one of the wolves was caught in the trap and had dragged it into hiding.

I found both wolves finally. Moonlight, caught in the trap, lay exhausted behind some rocks. Nearby in the brush I could barely make out the huge form of Silver Fang. Never had I seen such a massive wolf. Slowly I raised my rifle. Silver Fang knew the use of the gun in my hands. With a howl he exposed himself, rushing to attack me. I fired. He flattened himself to the ground to avoid my shot. But he refused to run for safety to the hills. I fired again and missed him.

With anger I aimed at his mate, Moonlight. At the report of my rifle blood flowed across the white fur of her chest. She rolled into a ball and was still. With a cry of despair for his dead mate, Silver Fang ran to the timber of the hills. He was never heard from nor seen in that area again.

Ending C

One very hot afternoon while hunting the wolves I decided to rest my horse and so I tied him in the shade of a tree. Also, because my rifle was heavy, I leaned it against the tree. Then I walked a short distance to a stream for water.

Suddenly my horse began to scream. I turned around to find Silver Fang crouching on the ground between me and my horse. In his terror my horse had knocked my rifle to the ground and had trampled on it. Silver Fang looked at me through narrow eyes. With one spring he could kill me easily. Yet, he was in no hurry. He seemed to enjoy waiting. Slowly I drew my pistol, which I wore at my side. The wolf showed no fear. Apparently, he did not know that a pistol also was a gun. I aimed for his left eye. In a moment my work would be done. But I did not fire. I don't know why. For some reason I could not pull the trigger.

Suddenly the wolf yawned and licked his lips. Then he trotted off to the hills as if he had more important things to do. That night I told the ranchers in that area to find a new hunter. I was through with the job of hunting wolves.

Ending D

For three months I set every kind of trap I knew, but Silver Fang found them all before their steel jaws could catch him. I left poison meat on the trails, but these two wolves would not touch it. I was really discouraged, and meanwhile the ranchers were losing more sheep.

Then one day I stopped at a cave to rest from the heat and sun. The cave was deep and cool. I could hear a bubbling spring in the rear of the cave and started to hunt for it. A low growl greeted me. Before me was crouched the biggest wolf I have ever seen. His snarling fangs were like tusks.

Drawing my pistol I fired a bullet into Silver Fang's left eye, stopping his spring in mid-air. Then I searched the cave until I found Moonlight. The ranchers were plenty happy to see the carcasses of those two wolves across my saddle when I rode in to town that night.



PROFUNDITY ANSWER SHEET

Name Key Teacher _____
 Date _____ Class _____ Age _____ Sex _____ School _____

Directions: For each item, choose which ending you think is more profound. Indicate your choice by writing its letter in the space provided.

Story I BASEBALL

1. C Endings A, B, C.
2. D Endings A, B, D.
3. B Endings A, B, E.
4. C Endings A, C, D.
5. C Endings A, C, E.
6. D Endings A, D, E.
7. C Endings B, C, D.
8. C Endings B, C, E.
9. D Endings B, D, E.
10. C Endings C, D, E.

Story II LIONS

1. B Endings A, B, C.
2. B Endings A, B, D.
3. E Endings A, B, E.
4. A Endings A, C, D.
5. E Endings A, C, E.
6. E Endings A, D, E.
7. B Endings B, C, D.
8. E Endings B, C, E.
9. E Endings B, D, E.
10. E Endings C, D, E.

Story III LOUISE

1. C Endings A, B, C.
2. B Endings A, B, D.
3. B Endings A, B, E.
4. C Endings A, C, D.
5. C Endings A, C, E.
6. D Endings A, D, E.
7. C Endings B, C, D.
8. C Endings B, C, E.
9. B Endings B, D, E.
10. C Endings C, D, E.

Story IV WOLVES

1. C Endings A, B, C.
2. B Endings A, B, D.
3. E Endings A, B, E.
4. C Endings A, C, D.
5. E Endings A, C, E.
6. E Endings A, D, E.
7. C Endings B, C, D.
8. E Endings B, C, E.
9. E Endings B, D, E.
10. E Endings C, D, E.

Ending E

I hunted those wolves for three months with no success. Then one night on the hunt Moonlight strayed too far from the side of her lord and ran into one of my traps. All night she tried to free herself with her faithful mate, Silver Fang, at her side. The scars of his teeth on the steel chain which held her showed the effort he had made in his attempt to free her.

When he saw me coming over the horizon in the light of the rising sun, Silver Fang ran to the tall timber in the hills. I shot Moonlight while she was still caught in the trap. Bringing her back to the ranch, I locked her carcass in a shed. That night the hills rang with the mournful cry of Silver Fang.

The next morning on my way to the barn, I noticed the massive form of Silver Fang crouching before the door of the shed in which his dead mate lay. I raised my gun, my heart pounding with excitement and fear. But Silver Fang did not move. When I got closer, I saw that he was dead. During the night he had eaten some of the poisoned meat I had dropped along a trail. Then he had traced the scent of Moonlight on the wind to the shed and there he died.

Now turn to the answer sheet and compare the endings for Story IV.